

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**More Than 750 Children Linked To Meth-Related DCS Investigations In Less Than Six Months**  
**Recent data show public child welfare system is burdened by scourge of meth**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** - Recent reports from the Department of Children's Services show that more than 750 children in the state have been linked to meth-related investigations in nearly the past six months. DCS began tracking the number of children connected to meth-related investigations in earnest in October 2004 through new data capturing abilities in its TNKids software.

According to the latest data, from October 2004-February 2005, DCS opened 424 new meth-related investigations, in which a total of 752 children were connected. In such cases, the exposure to a meth lab, meth use or meth distribution might not be the primary impetus for the investigation, but has been noted as a factor contributing to the abuse or neglect of a child.

"The meth epidemic is having an unquestionable impact on the number of DCS investigations being conducted and, as a result, the number of children documented as the innocent victims of this new wave of substance abuse," said Commissioner Viola P. Miller. "All forms of child abuse and neglect are detrimental to the safety and well-being of children; however, the nuances surrounding meth are proving to be particularly insidious."

The meth epidemic also presents other challenges for the agency.

"With meth causing an upswing in investigations – with some regions harder hit than others – it can create a strain on the workload of our caseworkers," added Commissioner Miller. "Meth also means working diligently to recruit more resource parents to foster children who might enter our custody as a result."

DCS is participating in the state's second annual meth conference, titled "Methamphetamine Response: A Multidiscipline Approach to Protecting Tennessee's Communities." The conference, which continues through March 30 at downtown Nashville's Renaissance Hotel, explores the effects that the meth epidemic has had on children, families and communities in Tennessee, and addresses possible solutions and approaches.

DCS caseworker Betsy Dunn, who was appointed by the Commissioner to serve on the Governor's meth task force, will be speaking on "After the Bust: Children in Meth Labs" on Tuesday, March 29, at 10 a.m. and 1p.m.

"Recognizing and countering the effects of the methamphetamine epidemic on children and families in Tennessee is everyone's business," said Dunn, a caseworker in the Upper Cumberland region. "It is a problem that demands the attention and efforts of professionals in a variety of fields, in conjunction with the grassroots recognition and vigilance of citizens in our communities."

To learn more about meth in Tennessee, visit Meth Free Tennessee at [www.methfreetn.org](http://www.methfreetn.org).

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services was established in 1996 to provide the best possible care for children and youth who are in state custody, or at significant risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

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